1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

463
369 men today, overwhelmingly so, though among carpenters quite a few rural ones still survive. Smiths and employers in smithing and other metals businesses, many of whom are presumably smiths employing a few hands, often their sons, are still country dwellers characteristically. Masons and foremen and overlookers of construction and building are still country dwellers, as are contractors' navvies and platelayers. Except for the smith, therefore, there are no characteristically rural artisans left outside the building trades.

Those in the building trades or in construction, in the west at least, are not highly skilled men at all, not even the masons. They are largely laborers and landless cotters who work for local authorities as stone breakers and suppliers of gravel and broken rock for road construction. They are often farmers' sons who get work off the farm whenever they find work is to be had. Yet the local mason who puts up stone houses in the countryside, and the petty contractor ready to get up a crew of local boys for any sort of building, are still characteristically rural dwellers and part of the rural scene.

In transport industries the only occupation which is even nearly rural in complexion is that of postman, for obvious [205] reasons. The local post office is usually a small crossroads shop in the western counties. The post office workers are members of the rural communities they serve.

In commerce, in spite of the two currents at work, no occupation is characteristically rural. Dealers in animal produce, however, come closest to it. Yet most livestock and animal produce dealers are now townsmen, often town shopkeepers as well. The country shop at a crossroad is still important but not characteristic.

Civic guards, clergymen, and schoolteachers make up the only other occupational classes in the country who still live in the rural districts and are part of rural communities.

Three other occupational classes, according to the table,

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

market areas are the areas of effective, habitual relationship among farmers. They are definable only in terms of social relations made up of the acts of specific local persons. Such relations differ in duration and the frequency of the events making them up. Change such relations and geography is changed. For a human setting geography is merely the locus of relationship. The system of distribution that orders space in rural Ireland functions to do so within a system of social relations, which we have called familism.

It is not surprising that the relationships existing between the small farmers and their local distributing agencies go farther by far than economic acts of barter, purchase, and sale. The country crossroad shopkeepers, especially, win very special status in rural communities out of these relationships. In Ireland and in Clare shopkeeping is predominantly an urban and small-town trade. Yet shops are numerous and important in the country districts, and a word must be said of them.

In typical western rural communities the smallest and poorest of the crossroad shops, serving the minutest areas, are ordinary cottages or farmhouses. The slightest alteration has sufficed to turn one of the rooms into an emporium where makeshift till, counter, and shelves carry little more than tobacco, matches, oil, and a few sweets and small sundries.

Such a shop is usually run by a woman, who subsists upon it and a plot of land or garden. She is often a widow, or the wife of a local tradesman. In many cases the little shop is the local post office as well, and a salary from the state contributes to the owner's upkeep. Such a shop is sometimes, too, a local gathering place for the boys, in the way the local smithy once was such a gathering place. The boys get their fags here. It is encumbent upon the woman who keeps the shop to make them presents at Christmas time, in recognition of their custom. Everyone agrees that the woman

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

populated country, the district under consideration is practically isolated, and communication with other parts of the country is carried on by road or by sea. Mails and passengers are carried daily to and from Ballina and Belmullet by a good two-horse (Bianconi) stage-car; and a similar vehicle, an opposition venture, also makes the journey daily with passengers and light goods. The country beyond Belmullet is provided with mails twice weekly. Goods are conveyed by carts from Ballina, a distance of over forty miles, during the winter and spring, and large sailing boats are sometimes employed carrying heavy goods from Westport. But few wheeled-vehicles are used except by the better-to-do, and in the remoter parts hardly any are employed, turf, sea-weed, &c., being carried in cleaves or pardoges (panniers with movable bottoms, slung over the backs of horses or donkeys). The people, if poor, have to walk; those better off may ride to market. It is common for two to ride the one horse, a man in the saddle and a woman *en croupe*, or both equestrians may be women, in which case, sometimes, but very rarely, the woman in front may ride astride.

The main roads are pretty good, but many of the smaller ones are very little used, except at harvest time or when turf is being got in, and as a result are grass-grown and uneven. Some small fishing hamlets and outlying places are still unprovided with roads.

For water transport there are the sailing boats before mentioned, used for the conveyance of goods from Westport. The form of boat most in use is the curragh, which is manned by three men; it varies somewhat in pattern in different localities.

In the Mullet and the islands 142 curraghs are in use. Very few boats of other patterns are kept, as there are only three second-class boats (yawls), and about thirty third-class. At Portacloy there are about 30 curraghs.

The southern part of the peninsula and the islands obtain their turf supply by boat from Achill and Ballycroy.

V.—FOLK-LORE.

Although poor in so many other respects, Erris is particularly rich in folk-lore, many old customs, traditions, and beliefs, which have died out, or are dying elsewhere, still flourishing there. The legends and tales of the past and many old songs are still current, especially among the older people, who, however, will not readily communicate them to strangers, so that only a resident well acquainted with Irish

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Coast guard personnel first were assigned to Inis Beag shortly after the lighthouse was built. Three guardsmen and their families lived in private dwellings in Terrace Village until the large station was erected after 1883 in Low Village, following which the contingent was enlarged to four men. The two-story structure contains four apartments, and these housed the families of the personnel until 1922. Now owned by the Irish Land Commission, two apartments are rented by islanders who sublet them to visitors; a third accommodates the nurse; and the other has been converted into a government sponsored knitting "factory" which employs local girls. One of the several outbuildings of the station contains the breeches buoy apparatus of the Coast Life Saving Service. The life saving company is composed of 15 Inis Beag men, hired and supervised by a branch of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and was responsible for the rescue of the freighter's crew in 1960—its only rescue operation since being formed almost 60 years ago. A boathouse was erected on the strand by the coast guard company, and now it serves as an all-purpose building: dance hall, trade school, storage house, and meeting place.

Health services are provided the folk by a nurse, a doctor who lives in a neighboring island, and medical and dental personnel from the mainland who visit the island occasionally for specific examination and treatment purposes. A much renowned mainland woman who lived in Inis Beag intermittently between 1903 and 1923 (and wrote a book about her experiences) was the first nurse to serve the islanders; but since 1932, the Lady Dudley Nursing Scheme of Dublin has maintained "Jubilee Nurses" in Inis Beag continuously, each one serving from one to five years. The nurse is responsible to the doctor, from whom she obtains medicines furnished by the county council, and handles most of the medical cases which arise. Bedridden patients and women who are secretive about their ailments are visited by her during two daily rounds, while after dark she is visited by other patients, mostly men, who are also secretive about their infirmities, and she may be called out on emergencies. The doctor comes to Inis Beag once a month and visits the seriously ill accompanied by the nurse, and in the case of emergencies at other times which cannot be taken care of by her, he is brought over in the lifeboat of the Coast Life Saving Service at her summons.

The post office in High Village is an adjunct to the house of its supervisor, just as the shops are to the homes of their proprietors. The office is a small room with a counter, separating the clerk and her desk and switchboard from those who do business there, and a telephone booth. A radio telephone serves the island and can be used between nine o'clock in the morning and six at night. A line runs to the house of "Number One" of the life saving company, which he alone can use in matters pertaining to the service during the prescribed hours. When the freighter ran aground before dawn, it was discovered by islanders who informed the company; Radio Eireann reported the plight of the vessel, on the basis of S.O.S. messages, in the seven o'clock news, but the company had reached the reef before the telephone was available.

Inis Beag has only a small church, known as the "chapel." After the church of the patron saint was abandoned, a house served as the place of worship for a time, then was superseded by the old chapel whose foundations can be discerned

JOHN C. MESSENGER

which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.